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Discovering the authenticity of a Liberation Cultural Heritage experience in South Africa: a market segmentation approach

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses a significant gap in the literature concerning the authenticity of tourism experiences, particularly in the context of cultural heritage sites. It focuses specifically on visitors to Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites in South Africa, enriching the discourse on authenticity within cultural heritage tourism. The primary aim was to identify distinct visitor segments at these sites, employing multiple segmentation bases. These bases included socio-demographic variables, visitation behaviour, motivation, and indicators of perceived authenticity, encompassing both object-based and existential aspects and evaluating supporting facilities and services. The study utilises a quantitative methodology, employing a digitally administered survey to gather data. A two-step cluster analysis identified two primary visitor segments: '*Comprehensive authenticity seekers*' and '*Emerging authenticity seekers*', with the former constituting the larger segment. This segmentation is pivotal for cultural heritage site managers, marketers, and policymakers, as it enables the development of tailored strategies that cater to each visitor group's specific needs and preferences. This research provides valuable insights for optimising resource allocation and enhancing the visitor experience. Such insights are crucial for promoting sustainable growth and competitiveness in cultural heritage tourism.

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Cultural heritage tourism; authenticity; liberation cultural heritage; cultural heritage sites; market segmentation

Introduction

Cultural heritage sites rank among the most popular tourist attractions globally (Chung et al., 2018; Cranmer, 2017). Such sites include a broad spectrum of elements like artefacts, monuments, groups of buildings, and museums, all embodying a range of values – symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological, anthropological, scientific, and social. This concept extends to tangible heritage, encompassing movable, immovable, or submerged items, and intangible cultural heritage inherently connected to cultural artefacts, sites, or monuments (UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation] Institute for Statistics, 2009). A cultural heritage site is also described as an architectural entity with cultural, social, historical, and aesthetic significance (Kerstetter et al., 2001; McKercher, 2002). These sites are characterised by their ability to become spiritual, political, national, or other cultural significant centres for both majority and minority groups (Boukas, 2014).

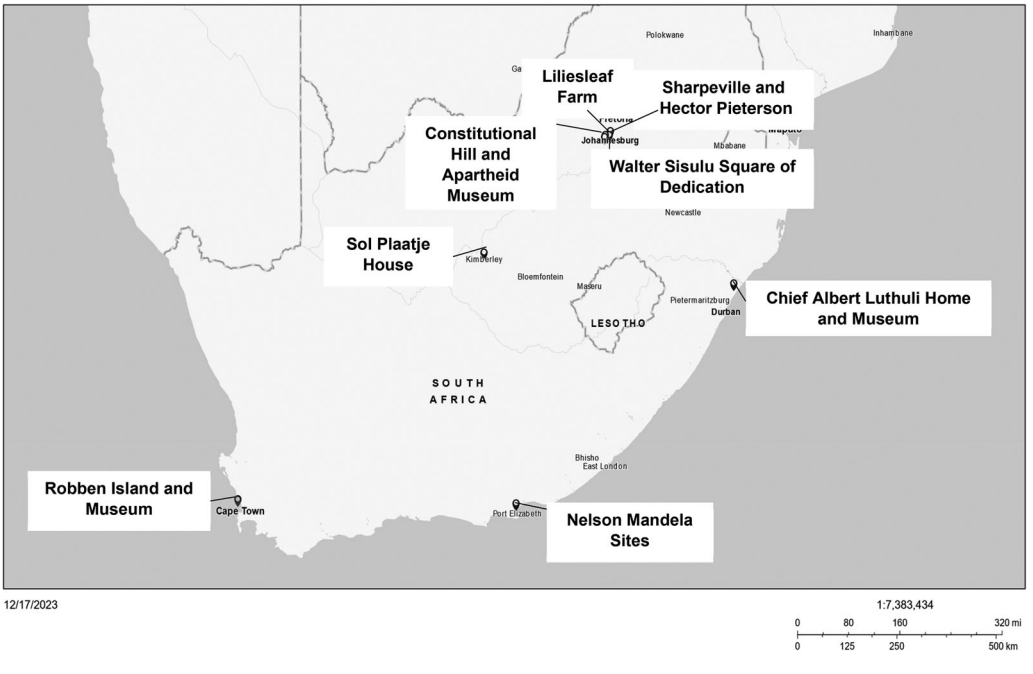
In South Africa, a plethora of political cultural heritage sites and museums play a predominant role in the cultural heritage tourism landscape (Ivanovic, 2011). The country's distinct and rich cultural heritage diversity is a crucial factor driving the rapid growth of its tourism sector. This point has been emphasised by several researchers, including Ivanovic (2011), Viljoen and Henama (2017)

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and Bhuda and Kgwadi (2023), who underline the pivotal role of cultural heritage in attracting tourists to South Africa. Particularly noteworthy is the country's transition from racial segregation to a post-1994 democracy, which adds considerable appeal and strength to its cultural narrative (Masilo & Van der Merwe, 2016). Post-apartheid, South Africa has developed a new cultural heritage sector comprising political attractions located at historically significant sites (Ivanovic & Ramoshaba, 2018; Soudien, 2015), which are now marketed as post-apartheid cultural heritage.

These attractions draw domestic and international cultural tourists, who find the sites' representation and symbolism significant (Ivanovic, 2011). They form part of the South African Liberation Heritage Route (LHR) and the Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites (LCHS), which are included in the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites, offering a unique experience within the emerging cultural heritage tourism sector (Masilo & Van der Merwe, 2016). These sites (see Map 1) share the historical narrative of the liberation struggle and provide meaningful experiences for cultural heritage tourists (Houston et al., 2014, November; Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013). Ivanovic (2011) and Mgxekwa (2016) observe that interest in liberation cultural heritage is a primary reason tourists visit these South African sites. LCHS embody South Africa's transition from racial segregation to post-1994 democracy. This transformation is a significant part of the country's history and a unique cultural narrative that attracts tourists. The significance of the LCHS lies in their representation and symbolism, particularly regarding South Africa's liberation struggle. As a result, LCHS have experienced a strong demand from cultural heritage tourists seeking authentic experiences (Butler & Ivanovic, 2016; Ivanovic, 2011; Ivanovic, 2014; Ivanovic & Ramoshaba, 2018).

Authenticity has become a pivotal feature and a key criterion in the planning and development of cultural heritage tourism (García-Almeida, 2019). Chhabra et al. (2003, p. 703) define authenticity as either 'an original or an accurate reproduction of the original,' capable of evoking nostalgic memories of the past. Li (2003:, p. 250) adds that authenticity entails 'a sense of being,' achieved through interactions with locals in tourist settings, encompassing environmental and people-based experiences or their interplay. The quest for authentic experiences is a prominent trend in



Map 1. LCHS in South Africa.
Source: Map designed by the authors using ArcGIS.

tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Perceived authenticity significantly impacts the quality of cultural heritage sites (del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). Canavan and McCamley (2021) describe it as a real, genuine, and truthful tourist experience shaped by interactions with the sites' buildings, souvenirs, delicacies, activities, and ceremonies (Yi et al., 2018).

Shang et al. (2020) note that cultural heritage tourists often recognise the objective originality of cultural attributes, shaping their subjective heritage experiences and existential self-reflection. Consequently, authenticity is a crucial determinant of the overall tourist experience, significantly influencing the destination's image (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lin & Liu, 2018; Park et al., 2019). Bryce et al. (2015) and Kolar and Zabkar (2010) observed a positive relationship between authenticity and tourist loyalty. Lin and Liu (2018) found a correlation between the motivation to visit historical sites and increased perceptions of authenticity, enhancing tourist loyalty.

Authenticity plays a crucial role in the planning and marketing of cultural heritage sites (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Understanding the motivations, behaviours, and characteristics of tourists visiting these sites is essential to providing them with the authentic experiences they seek. This understanding is particularly important for developing countries like South Africa, where leveraging the cultural heritage tourism sector is seen as a strategy to rejuvenate its tourism industry and enhance its competitiveness on a global scale. Heritage and cultural tourism represent one of the fastest-growing niche tourism markets, both domestically and internationally (Bhuda & Kgwadi, 2023). Over time, the expansion of cultural heritage tourism has coincided with increasing tourists seeking genuine and memorable experiences, which often involve meaningful engagement with local people and their cultures (Viljoen & Henama, 2017). However, research on the perceived authenticity of liberation heritage sites is still emerging (Ivanovic, 2011; Ivanovic, 2014; Ivanovic & Ramoshaba, 2018).

This study aims to fill a notable gap in cultural heritage tourism literature by building upon previous market segmentation research focused on visitors to cultural heritage sites (Chhabra, 2010; Menor-Campos et al., 2020; Mgxekwa et al., 2019; Prayag et al., 2022; Ramires et al., 2018). The rationale for employing market segmentation in this study is to deepen the understanding of how different visitor segments perceive authenticity at LCHS. While the primary research gap identified is the lack of studies on the perceived authenticity of these sites, market segmentation serves as a critical tool to address this gap. This is achieved by examining how various visitor segments – distinguished by socio-demographic characteristics, visitation patterns, motivations, media preferences, and preferences for auxiliary facilities and services – perceive and value authenticity in their experiences at LCHS. Each segment may have unique perspectives and expectations regarding what constitutes an 'authentic' experience at these heritage sites. For instance, international tourists might value historical accuracy and cultural representation more, while domestic tourists might seek personal connections with the narratives presented. By segmenting the market, the study can delve into these nuanced expectations and how they shape the overall perception of authenticity at LCHS.

Furthermore, understanding these segment-specific perceptions is essential for the effective preservation, interpretation, and sustainable management of LCHS. It allows for tailoring interpretive strategies, educational programmes, and promotional efforts to align with the authenticity expectations of different visitor groups. This tailored approach enhances visitor satisfaction and contributes to the broader goals of cultural heritage tourism, including visitor education, heritage conservation, and sustainable tourism development. Therefore, integrating market segmentation in this research directly informs the study of perceived authenticity at LCHS. It provides a framework for examining how different visitor groups experience authenticity, thus filling the identified research gap. The subsequent research questions are posited to explore these relationships in detail, aiming to enrich the understanding of visitor engagement with LCHS and offer practical insights for their sustainable management and promotion.

RQ1: Can different market segments be identified for LCHS based on visitors' profile characteristics (socio-demographics, visitation behaviour, and preferences)?

RQ2: Can distinct visitor segments at LCHS be delineated based on their preferences for specific marketing mediums?

RQ3: Can visitors to LCHS be categorised based on their distinct motivations?

RQ4: Can visitor segments at LCHS be differentiated based on their perceived object-based, existential authenticity and the outcome of an authentic visitor experience?

RQ5: Do the differences in visitor segments at LCHS arise from the varying levels of importance they attribute to supporting facilities and services?

Literature review

In the tourism field, authenticity is also a concern in the analysis of cultural heritage tourism (García-Almeida, 2019), and discussions of this issue are a core aspect of cultural heritage sites (López-Guzmán & Santa-Cruz, 2017). This section reviews reigning theories of perceived authenticity indicators (object-based and existential). It discusses supporting facilities and services as additional attributes for authentic visitor experiences. Moreover, motivation, market segmentation and effective marketing of sites are essential topics in studying cultural heritage tourism, and therefore, they are discussed.

Indicators of perceived authenticity in tourism

Authenticity in tourism research, rooted in the works of Boorstin (1964), MacCannell (1973), and Cohen (1979), has been a topic of extensive debate. Boorstin (1964) pointed towards 'pseudo-events' in tourism, while MacCannell (1973) emphasised the drive of the tourist to experience what is genuine. Cohen (1979) considered authenticity a socially constructed concept tied to the interpretations of tourists. Wang (1999) re-evaluated these studies, suggesting two perceived authenticity indicators, namely object-based and existential, which have become essential in modern cultural heritage tourism research (García-Almeida, 2019; Genc & Gulertekin Genc, 2023; Han & Bae, 2022; Lee et al., 2020; Park et al., 2019; Shang et al., 2020).

Object-based authenticity concerns the genuineness of origins or the precision of historical item imitations. This concept is separated into objective and constructive authenticity. Objective authenticity refers to the originality of tourist objects, evaluated against established criteria. Tourists assess the authenticity of items like local art, crafts, and cultural heritage based on their 'realness' or historical accuracy (Andriotis, 2011; Chhabra, 2012; Han & Bae, 2022; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Wang & Wu, 2013). In this context, the tangible aspects of tourist sites are of particular significance (Yi et al., 2017).

Intangible cultural heritage, conversely, includes elements such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and knowledge and practices about nature and the universe. It also encompasses skills needed for producing traditional crafts. These elements, inherited from ancestors, are recognised by communities as essential cultural heritage components (UNESCO, 2003). Authentic intangible cultural heritage is a unique selling point for a community in the competitive global tourism market, enhancing its attractiveness and distinctiveness (Kim et al., 2019).

Constructive authenticity emphasises the importance of personal beliefs regarding an object. It shifts the focus from the actual originality of an object to the perceived authenticity based on symbolic values and personal expectations (Han & Bae, 2022; Karagözl & Uysal, 2022; Robinson & Clifford, 2012; Souza et al., 2020; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). This viewpoint recognises the dynamic nature of cultures and societies and the varying interpretations and values tourists attach to authenticity in different contexts. Regardless of whether authenticity is perceived from an objective or constructivist perspective, its significance remains intertwined and pivotal in cultural tourism (Wang, 1999).

Existential authenticity focuses on the experiential aspect rather than physical objects. This concept can be categorised into intrapersonal and interpersonal authenticity. Intrapersonal authenticity is associated with physical sensations, relaxation, and personal development (Wang, 1999). It emphasises experiences that foster self-awareness and learning (Kirillova & Lehto, 2015). Interpersonal authenticity pertains to creating connections and bonds during travel experiences (Stepchenkova & Park, 2021). From a postmodern perspective, authenticity is not exclusively linked to genuine, original objects (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2014; Terziyska, 2012; Uriely, 2005). Tourists may pursue personal authenticity through activities such as walking or camping, which do not necessarily focus on the authenticity of objects. In essence, postmodern tourists prioritise their enjoyment and are open to embracing various forms of authenticity (Yi et al., 2018).

Supporting facilities and services in cultural heritage sites

Debates on perceived authenticity indicators predominantly focus on understanding tourist experiences at cultural heritage sites (Han & Bae, 2022; Shang et al., 2020). However, scholars such as Abuamoud et al. (2014) and Hou (2009) emphasise the importance of supporting facilities and services in enhancing experiences at these destinations. Often termed 'destination factors,' entities such as the World Tourism Organization (2015) stress their significance for sustainable tourism development. These facilities are integral for the upkeep, enhancement, and relevance of cultural heritage sites. For instance, Hou (2009) accentuates attributes such as accessibility and edutainment, whereas Mgxekwa (2016) highlights attributes such as quality service, modern facilities, and technology for effective marketing of such sites. The consensus is clear that without these foundational attributes, even the most authentic cultural products fall short in marketing.

Motivation for visiting cultural heritage sites

Scholarly work underscores the importance of understanding motivations in cultural heritage tourism (Li et al., 2015; McGrath et al., 2017; Nguyen & Cheung, 2016; Remoaldo et al., 2017). Correia et al. (2013) and Lopes (2011), drawing from Dann's (1977) push–pull theory, differentiate between push motivations (socio-psychological factors like emotional desires, relaxation, and personal growth) and pull motivations (destination attributes such as accommodation, infrastructure, or facilities). Vong and Ung (2012) identified four critical factors for developing heritage sites: the site's history and culture, available facilities and services, understanding of the area's heritage, and tourist attractions. Additionally, the demand for heritage sites is influenced by public services and local community engagement (Abuamoud et al., 2014).

As Lin and Liu (2018) assert, tourists require compelling reasons to visit destinations. Research shows a correlation between push and pull motivations (Correia et al., 2013) and identifies diverse motivators, including a yearning for a heritage experience (Poria et al., 2004), learning about site culture and history (Nguyen & Cheung, 2016), and seeking knowledge about racial segregation history (Ivanovic, 2011). Educational motives are frequently cited as primary drivers (Herzig, 2017; Timothy & Boyd, 2006), but entertainment and personal connections also significantly influence tourist inclinations (Chen & Chen, 2010). Vareiro et al. (2016) categorise heritage tourists' motivations into four components: historic references and accessibility, shopping and entertainment, convenience, and efficiency, reflecting the growing trend towards authentic cultural heritage experiences (Remoaldo et al., 2017).

Poria et al. (2004) found that recreational experiences, heritage experiences, and learning history are common reasons for visiting heritage sites. Like other forms of tourism, cultural heritage tourists seek relaxation and entertainment, which align with biological needs (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Poria et al., 2004). Emotional experiences that engender a sense of personal heritage connection are also sought after (Kerstetter et al., 2001; Poria et al., 2004). Learning about heritage sites' physical nature and history is another critical motivation (Kerstetter et al., 2001; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999;

Poria et al., 2004). Social motives (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999), authentic experiences (Kerstetter et al., 2001), and cultural motives (Chen & Chen, 2010) are additional driving factors. Among these, educational/learning motivation is often cited as the most critical (Goh, 2009; Jansen-Verbeke & Rekom, 1996). Su et al. (2020) synthesise these findings into three dimensions of cultural heritage travel motivation: emotional experiences, recreational experiences, and educational/cultural experiences.

Outcomes of authentic visitor experiences

Explorations on the outcomes of authentic experiences in cultural heritage sites aim to unravel the constituents of genuine visitor encounters (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Some studies draw parallels between authenticity and satisfaction (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018; Nguyen & Cheung, 2016), while others prioritise visitor loyalty as the pinnacle of an authentic experience (Bryce et al., 2015). Emphasising the interplay between motivation and loyalty, Bryce et al. (2015) ascertained that visitors deeply engaged in existential authenticity tend to demonstrate stronger loyalty, thus affirming earlier findings (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Therefore, loyalty manifests in revisiting intentions of tourists and a propensity to endorse a destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). However, Park et al. (2019) remark that the empirical evaluation of relationships between loyalty phases remains limited.

Market segmentation in cultural heritage tourism

A burgeoning body of research has explored segmentation and typology within the context of cultural heritage tourists (Cheung & Huang, 2018a, 2018b; Cruz et al., 2020). These studies can be bifurcated into two foundational categories based on their segmenting criteria: those relying on 'a singular segmentation variable' and those employing 'multiple segmentation variables' (Cheung & Huang, 2018b). Many of these investigations predominantly use motivation as a pivotal factor to delineate cultural heritage tourists. McKercher and du Cros (2002) and McKercher (2020) discerned five distinct tourist typologies, such as 'purposeful' and 'sightseeing' tourists, based on the intersection of cultural motivation and site knowledge. Succeeding studies by Nguyen and Cheung (2014), Cruz et al. (2020), and Cheung and Huang (2018a) expanded upon this framework. For instance, Nguyen and Cheung's (2014) research distilled five heritage tourist categories, with the 'sightseeing' and 'purposeful' segments particularly prominent. Cheung and Huang (2018a) further refined this classification by exploring the role of cultural centrality in shaping tourists' experiences.

Weaver et al. (2002) characterised tourists as 'Active Benefit Seekers' and 'Loners' based on the benefits they sought. Poria et al. (2003) segmented tourists by their perceived relationship to the site's heritage, suggesting that recognising a site as a part of their own heritage is foundational to heritage tourism. Additional studies, like those conducted by Therkelsen (2003), Nyaupane et al. (2006) and López-Guzmán et al. (2019), further diversify the landscape of cultural heritage tourism segmentation. These delve into aspects ranging from the centrality of cultural heritage in travel decisions to diverse motivations shaped by gastronomy and culture.

Nonetheless, among these diverse segmentation strategies, McKercher's (2020) approach stands out as a particularly influential and operational framework (Cheung & Huang, 2018b), with the 'motivation' criterion being a dominant factor. Yet, while McKercher's model has significantly advanced cultural tourist typology, it invites further refinement in methodology (Cheung & Huang, 2018b). The current study aimed to segment cultural heritage tourists based on a holistic mix of factors, including socio-demographics, behaviours, motivations, preferred marketing mediums, perceived authenticity dimensions, and the significance of supporting facilities and services.

Strategic marketing approaches for cultural heritage tourism: segmenting and communicating to diverse visitor demographics

Recent demands for authentic historical depictions require advanced tourism management, particularly in marketing cultural heritage sites (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Understanding visitor demands is crucial for developing products and promotional strategies that align with these preferences (Chhabra, 2009; Hasan & Jobaid, 2014). Effective marketing of cultural heritage sites necessitates selecting appropriate media and distribution channels to reach various visitor segments (Henama et al., 2016). Neuhofer et al. (2012) emphasise the importance of innovative market segmentation to address increasing competition among heritage sites. The World Tourism Organisation (2018) recommends targeted marketing strategies, adapting to changes in visitor demographics and preferences, including emerging markets and the specific interests of younger generations (World Tourism Organisation Travel Confederation, 2016).

The goal of segmentation is to inform communication strategies, enabling the design of effective messages (Chhabra, 2009). Schiffman and Kanuk (1991) distinguish between interpersonal and impersonal communication channels, both used in heritage tourism. Studies highlight the influence of travel orientations on the choice of communication channels (Chhabra et al., 2002). Different strategies cater to first-time and repeat visitors, focusing on informative messages for new prospects and relevance-based messages for repeat visitors (Reid & Reid, 1994; Walters et al., 2007). While the promotion mix includes various elements (Kotler et al., 2006), print ads remain a staple in heritage tourism promotion (Manfredo et al., 1992; Smith & Mackay, 2001). The effectiveness of advertising in reaching target markets is well-documented (Xiao & Mair, 2006), with brochures and pamphlets being popular among travellers (Hsieh & O'Leary, 2012). Despite mixed conversion rates reported for brochures (Wicks & Schuett, 1994), they are heavily utilised in heritage tourism marketing.

Research has also focused on the impact of advertising through various media, examining word meanings and imagery (Gartner, 1994). Studies also explored how external stimuli in advertisements evoke consumer responses (Walters et al., 2007). Walters et al. (2007) found that concrete imagery and imagination instructions enhance print advertising's product recall and consumption vision. Heritage tourism marketing aims to develop promotional strategies and content that resonate with targeted visitor segments, maximising profits while guiding the sustainable use of heritage sites (Chhabra, 2009).

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative methodology, using a digital survey administered through QuestionPro©, an online research analytics software. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced this choice of survey design. The initial detection of the first Coronavirus case in South Africa disrupted pre-existing plans to visit selected Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites (LCHS) to distribute self-administered questionnaires. Traditional, in-person data collection methods became unfeasible due to safety concerns related to the virus's spread and the dramatic reduction in national and international visitors following travel restrictions. Consequently, the research design pivoted towards an online approach. This decision prioritised the health of potential respondents and the research team while ensuring the integrity and timeliness of data collection. Under these challenging conditions, the online survey was identified as the most effective and suitable method, allowing for the continuation of research despite pandemic-related constraints.

Van Selm and Jankowski (2006) describe online surveys 'global reach', highlighting their ability to access samples from extensive geographic areas. Online surveys offer advantages in questionnaire preparation, data collection, data storage, data visualisation, and collaborative work, all while being cost-effective and time-efficient (Ball, 2019; Nayak & Narayan, 2019). However, challenges such as sampling issues, response rates, characteristics of non-respondents, confidentiality maintenance, and ethical considerations must be addressed (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). The researchers diligently applied principles of survey research to the online format to mitigate bias and enhance rigour.

Sampling method and survey

This study adopted non-probability sampling methods, employing an online questionnaire distributed through a social media campaign for data collection. The strategy combined convenience and snowball sampling techniques to achieve sufficient response rates. This approach proved particularly apt for targeting the distinct group of visitors to LCHS, a population challenging to identify and enumerate during COVID-19. Due to the specific characteristics of this group, the challenge of creating a comprehensive list of potential respondents during the pandemic was acknowledged as nearly insurmountable (Zickar & Keith, 2023).

Baltar and Brunet (2012) observed that leveraging social networking sites (Web 2.0) effectively reaches 'hard-to-reach' populations. The principal advantages of this technique include its ability to broaden geographical reach and aid in identifying individuals who otherwise face access barriers. Consequently, employing virtual networks in non-probabilistic samples can enhance the sample's size and representativeness. Furthermore, snowball sampling is a well-recognised and viable method for recruiting participants who are not easily accessible or known to researchers (Marcus et al., 2017). Leighton et al. (2021) further demonstrate that utilising snowball sampling through social media is an efficient and effective means of recruiting participants for a study.

The researchers identified Facebook groups related to cultural heritage, heritage tourism, and tourism, including groups such as The World's Tourism, Marketing and Managing Tourism Destination Group, Global Tourism Experts, Tourism Management at UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 1,000,000 Friends of Nelson Mandela, The Heritage Conservation Society, Liliesleaf Farm, USA Tourists, Tourism Research Network, and Heritage Tourism. After obtaining permission from group moderators, a message explaining the research and the questionnaire link was posted on the Facebook pages. In addition, convenience sampling was used by the researcher's personal and professional networks on LinkedIn. Snowball sampling was employed by requesting participants to share the questionnaire link with their networks or contacts who met the research criteria.

This non-probability sampling approach relies on data collected from a participating population that is readily available and willing to participate in the research study. The social media campaign was conducted from 15 June 2021–3 August 2021. According to quarterly reports of Statistics South Africa on international arrivals for the first quarter (January-March) in 2020, South Africa received an average of about one million foreign visitors per month (StatsSA, 2020), and more than 75,000 tourists visit LCHS annually. The LCHS social media pages showed that, as of 2021, they had more than one million subscribers per page. Based on guidelines by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the target sample size for a population of 75 000 should be 382.

A total of 700 responses were obtained, validating the study sample. However, the questionnaire further differentiated respondents based on whether they had previously visited LCHS in South Africa or intended to do so. Among the respondents, 303 indicated that they had visited LCHS before, and only these responses were included in the analysis to reflect the perceived authenticity and experience of visitors at these sites. The final sample size utilised in the cluster analysis comprised 180 respondents, smaller than the initial sample of 303 respondents. This reduction in sample size was necessary to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analysis. Precisely, only those responses where every section of the questionnaire was fully completed were included in the cluster analysis. The authors acknowledge the limitation of an unrepresentative sample size, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. However, given the exploratory nature of the research and the focus on a developing country perspective, the results are still deemed valuable.

Questionnaire development

The survey incorporated a comprehensive approach emphasising the importance of capturing key characteristics and motivations of the respondents, primarily inspired by significant research contributions in cultural heritage tourism. The questionnaire for this study was developed in English,

given its status as one of the most widely spoken and understood languages worldwide. Utilising English for the questionnaire facilitated accessibility to a diverse and extensive audience. This approach was particularly pertinent as the research was aimed at an international and multicultural population, making English an effective medium for broad reach and inclusivity. Section A outlined socio-demographic traits, including the origin, gender, age, marital status, level of education, economic activity, and usual travel companions of the respondents. These variables were derived from prevalent methods that focus on socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics in cultural heritage tourism research, which is crucial for tourism marketing and management at cultural heritage destinations (Chiu et al., 2013; Mgxekwa, 2016; Phosikham et al., 2015). Section B assessed visitation behaviour and motivation for visiting Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites (LCHS). This included a 5-point Likert scale based on statements that had been applied in numerous studies (Ivanovic, 2011; Li et al., 2015; McGrath et al., 2017; Nguyen & Cheung, 2016; Remoaldo et al., 2017) to measure primary reasons for visiting LCHS. This section also appraised the authenticity of the respondents' experiences using a semantic differential scale. Section C focused on perceptions of the authenticity of cultural heritage tourism through an array of eight statements, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. This section additionally explored perceived authenticity indicators and the importance of authentic cultural heritage experiences. The section employed various authenticity attributes and supporting statements to measure these perceptions, ranked on a 5-point Likert scale. Lastly, Section D concentrated on the outcomes of an authentic visitor experience, using a 5-point Likert scale to measure loyalty-related statements. The design of these sections was based on and adapted from several studies encompassing cultural heritage tourism and authenticity (Ivanovic, 2011; Ivanovic & Ramoshaba, 2018; Lin & Liu, 2018; Masilo & Van der Merwe, 2016; Mgxekwa, 2016; Nkwanyana, 2012; Remoaldo et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2015).

Data analysis

The data collected for this study were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28 (IBM, 2023). To ensure sample adequacy and factorability of the data before data reduction, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test of sampling adequacy (KMO > 0.7) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$) were conducted (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974; Kaiser, 1970). The study conducted seven distinct Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) to elucidate various factors. These factors include marketing media that affect awareness, primary motives for visiting the LCHS, perceived attributes of object-based and existential authenticity, and supporting facilities and services that contribute to visitor satisfaction. Additionally, the impact of an authentic experience on visitors was examined. This multifaceted approach was adopted to accommodate the varying Likert scales used for item measurement in different questionnaire sections. In each case, a principal component extraction method (Eigenvalue [EV] > 1) was applied to reduce the dimensions, and Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalisation was conducted to enhance the interpretability of each factor structure. Items with a factor loading coefficient of >0.30 were considered to ensure that only significant items were retained (Field, 2018). All factors were reliable at $\alpha > 0.6$ (Cronbach & Warrington, 1951), and the average inter-item correlations were within the recommended range of 0.15 and 0.55 (Cohen, 1988). These methods ensured a rigorous data analysis, and the results were reliable and valid for further interpretation.

The two-step cluster analysis is a pivotal method in this study as it allows for the simultaneous analysis of both categorical and continuous data, aligning perfectly with the study's requirements. This method effectively analyses demographic, psychographic, geographic, and behavioural data, as Chiu et al. (2001) and Rundle-Thiele et al. (2015) noted. In line with Norusis (2011), the two-step cluster analysis was conducted in SPSS using the log-likelihood measure, which efficiently uncovers natural groupings within the dataset. This specific analysis approach was selected because it uniquely facilitates the formation of clusters based on a combination of continuous and categorical data (Norusis, 2008), thereby eliminating the need for data transformation before analysis. This

advantage allows researchers to preserve complete information, enriching the data's explanatory power for managerial decision-making (Hsu et al., 2006; Tkaczynski et al., 2010).

The process of two-step cluster analysis unfolds in two stages. The first stage involves grouping original cases into preclusters by constructing a cluster features tree, a method described by Okazaki (2007). The second stage applies the standard hierarchical clustering algorithm to these preclusters, as Norusis (2011) detailed. This hierarchical approach enables the exploration of various solutions with different cluster numbers, leading to a selection of the best cluster number based on Schwarz's Bayesian information criterion (BIC), a highly regarded and objective selection metric (Chiu et al., 2001; Norusis, 2011). Variables for analysis are chosen based on the lowest BIC value (Norusis, 2011).

Upon forming the cluster solution, significance testing is undertaken using χ^2-tests for categorical variables and *t*-tests for continuous variables. This helps determine the importance of individual variables in each cluster, with variables considered significant if their statistic's absolute value exceeds the critical threshold (Norusis, 2011). Finally, the study ensures the validity of the cluster solution through three validation measures. The first involves verifying that the silhouette measure of cohesion and separation exceeds the required 0.0 level, indicating valid within-cluster and between-cluster distances (Norusis, 2011). The second measure involves performing χ^2 and *t*-tests on categorical and continuous variables, respectively, to affirm the significance of individual variables in distinguishing clusters. The third validation step ensures that the final cluster solution, including clusters' size, number, and characteristics, remains consistent when the data is halved (Norusis, 2011). This approach allowed for comprehensive data analysis and ensured a more object-based and rigorous analysis of the visitor segments at LCHS.

Results

Profile of respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents. The research encompasses a diverse demographic spectrum. The geographic representation primarily hails from South Africa (89%) with a small international contingent (11%). Within South Africa, the highest representation comes from Eastern Cape Province (41%), followed by Gauteng (21%) and Western Cape (14%). The international respondents mainly stemmed from neighbouring countries, like Botswana and Zimbabwe, and a small percentage from South Africa's main source markets, including the USA, Germany, and Belgium. Regarding gender, there was a larger representation of female respondents

Table 1. Respondents' profile.

Demographic characteristics	Percentages
Geographic dispersion	South Africa (89%), International (11%)
South African Province representation	Eastern Cape Province (41%), Gauteng (21%), Western Cape (14%)
International representation	Neighbouring countries, including Botswana (2%) and Zimbabwe (1%), and South Africa's main source markets, including the USA (1%), Germany (1%), and Belgium (1%)
Gender	Female (70%), Male (29%), Non-binary (1%)
Age	25–34 years old (36%), 35–44 years old (25%) and 18–24 years old (22%)
Marital status	Single (never married) (61%), Married (30%)
Level of education	Postgraduate qualifications (35%), Bachelor's degrees (21%) or tertiary diplomas (15%)
Economic activity	Employed in the public sector (33%), Students (33%), Employed in the private sector (20%)
Usual travel companions	Family (adults and children) (35%), Partners (31%), Friends and family (30%), Work colleagues (13%), Children (13%), High school/college/university (7%), Part of tour groups (5%)
Previous visits to LCHS	Once before (35%), Twice (30%), Three times (13%)
LCHS visited	Nelson Mandela Sites (Qunu, Mandela House) (52%), Robben Island and Museum (45%), Constitution Hill and Apartheid Museum (28%), Hector Pieterson Memorial (25%), Walter Sisulu House of Dedication (20%), Sharpeville (13%), Chief Albert Luthuli Museum (11%), Sol Plaatjie House (5%)

Table 2. EFA results.

Factors	Items	Eigenvalues (EV)	Var. (%)	Loading Coeff. (>.50) Min	Max	Avg. inter-item correlation	Cronbach (α)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
[1]**Marketing mediums influencing awareness** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree]								
Above-the-line	6	4.67	42%	0.62	0.83	0.47	0.84	3.56
Below-the-line	5	1.65	15%	0.64	0.84	0.48	0.82	3.06
[2]**Motives for visiting South African LCHS** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree]								
Cultural heritage interest	7	4.13	59%	0.40	0.87	0.50	0.87	4.07
[3]**Perceived authenticity** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree]								
Truthful messages	4	4.20	53%	0.78	0.93	0.64	0.88	4.32
Truthful site presentation	4	21.14	14%	0.56	0.91	0.46	0.77	4.10
[4]**Object-based authenticity attributes** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important]								
Diverse interpretation attributes	7	6.70	56%	0.49	0.96	0.58	0.90	4.19
Tangible attributes	5	1.25	10%	0.32	0.94	0.55	0.85	3.90
[5]**Existential authenticity attributes** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important]								
Educational attributes	10	9.50	56%	0.46	0.94	0.58	0.93	4.01
Recreational attributes	7	1.23	7%	0.42	0.88	0.54	0.89	3.83
[6]**Supporting factors** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important]								
Quality service	9	7.96	57%	0.64	0.90	0.63	0.94	4.37
Modern facilities	5	1.25	9%	0.36	0.86	0.49	0.83	4.04
[7]**The outcome of an authentic visitor experience** [5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree]								
LCHS loyalty	5	3.40	68%	0.74	0.89	0.59	0.88	4.32

[1]Marketing mediums influencing awareness: [KMO = 0.85, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (55) = 2176.174, $p < 0.05$]
[2]Motives for visiting South African LCHS: [KMO = 0.90, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (21) = 1726.212, $p < 0.05$]
[3]Perceived authenticity: [KMO = 0.88, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (28) = 1647.400, $p < 0.05$]
[4]Object-based authenticity attributes: [KMO = 0.93, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (66) = 2940.432, $p < 0.05$]
[5]Existential authenticity attributes: [KMO = 0.95, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (136) = 4779.875, $p < 0.05$]
[6]Supporting factors: [KMO = 0.95, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (91) = 3812.242, $p < 0.05$]
[7]The outcome of an authentic visitor experience: [KMO = 0.84, Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (10) = 1034.809, $p < 0.05$]

(70%) compared to males (29%), with a small proportion identifying as non-binary (1%). The age group was predominantly young to middle-aged adults, with the highest representation being 25–34 years (36%), followed by 35–44 years (25%) and 18–24 years (22%). The majority of the respondents were single (never married) (61%), and a substantial number were married (30%). In terms of education, many respondents had high levels of education, with postgraduate qualifications (35%) being the most common, followed by Bachelor's degrees (21%) and tertiary diplomas (15%). A third of the respondents were employed in the public sector (33%) or were students (33%), with a smaller number working in the private sector (20%). Travel companions of the respondents usually include family (adults and children) (35%), partners (31%), and a mix of friends and family (30%). Several participants had previously visited LCHS at least once (35%), twice (30%), or three times (13%). The most frequently visited LCHS were the Nelson Mandela Sites (52%), Robben Island and Museum (45%), and Constitution Hill and Apartheid Museum (28%).

EFA results

The EFAs were adequate and suitable for factor analysis in all cases. As shown in Table 2, two marketing mediums were extracted. *Above-the-line* ($\bar{x} = 3.56$) obtained the higher mean value, implying these marketing mediums have a greater influence in creating awareness than *below-the-line* mediums ($\bar{x} = 3.06$). This result supports the observations made in the literature that above the line is the primary source of information visitors use in planning their trip to cultural heritage destinations (Phosikham et al., 2015). One motive for visiting LCHS was extracted. *Cultural heritage interest* ($\bar{x} = 4.07$) was an important motive for visiting LCHS in South Africa. The result is consistent with the findings of Ivanovic (2011), Kose (2015), and Ramoshaba (2016) within the South African context, which revealed that a primary motivation for tourists visiting cultural heritage sites in South Africa is their interest in the liberation history of the country.

Regarding perceived authenticity, that is, the aspects that respondents regard when defining the concept of authenticity, two factors were identified. *Truthful messages* ($\bar{x} = 4.32$) obtained the higher mean value, suggesting that respondents consider the concept of authenticity to entail truthful messages at the LCHS. This was followed closely by *truthful site presentation* ($\bar{x} = 4.10$). Two object-based authenticity attributes were identified. *Diverse interpretation attributes* ($\bar{x} = 4.19$) was the most important factor, followed by *tangible attributes* ($\bar{x} = 3.90$). Studies on cultural heritage tourism confirm the results. Biran (2008) pointed out that tourists are drawn to different interpretations of a site owing to the diverse meanings they attach to it. Austin (2002) further explained that the different and varied meanings that visitors attributed to a site shape their expectations regarding the on-site interpretation of information and their overall perception of the trip. Yi et al. (2017) noted that tangible elements such as architectural heritage influence tourists' perception of authenticity. Ke (2011) defined architectural heritage as encompassing the buildings, their interior design and decoration, and the surrounding atmosphere or environment.

Educational attributes ($\bar{x} = 4.01$) was extracted as the most important existential authenticity attribute, followed by *recreational attributes* ($\bar{x} = 3.83$). When examining the *educational attributes* factor in the context of cultural heritage tourism authenticity, specifically through the lens of 'learning,' the factor is consistent with previous research. This factor aligns with earlier studies on the topic, including Herzig (2017), Ivanovic (2011), Kose (2015), Nguyen and Cheung (2016), Timothy and Boyd (2006), and Ramoshaba (2016). The *recreational attributes* factor confirms previous research by Rickly-Boyd (2012) that suggested a quest for subjective or existential authenticity experiences may lead to a focus on emotions, sensations, relationships, and self-discovery. *Quality service* ($\bar{x} = 4.37$) was considered the most important supporting factor for a satisfying visitor experience, followed by *modern facilities* ($\bar{x} = 4.04$). The literature highlights the importance of providing quality experiences for cultural heritage tourism. Hargrove (1999) asserted that quality experiences are crucial for this type of tourism. Mgxekwa (2016) further argued that the services offered by cultural heritage sites play a vital role in attracting visitors and promoting the growth and development of cultural heritage tourism. Fischer (1999) also emphasised the need to provide authentic and quality experiences as a fundamental principle in developing cultural heritage sites. Mgxekwa (2016) highlighted the importance of modern facilities in ensuring the success of a cultural heritage site. Finally, *LCHS loyalty* was extracted and regarded as very important in determining the outcome of an authentic experience ($\bar{x} = 4.32$).

Refer to Appendix A for the complete list of items and factor loadings.

Two-step cluster analysis results

The data were analysed using a two-step cluster analysis approach on 21 segmentation variables derived from socio-demographic variables and factors identified in the EFAs. The analysis produced a sample size of 180 with two clusters with significant within-cluster and between-cluster distance (a silhouette measure of cohesion of 1.28 and separation of 0.3 above the required level of 0.0). Cross-tabulations, chi-square tests, and *t*-tests confirmed the differences between the two clusters based on the 21 included variables. The same number of clusters was identified when the file was split for validation purposes, indicating the reliability of the cluster solution.

The study conducted independent sample *t*-tests to compare the mean scores of continuous variables between the two segments, as presented in Table 3. The effect sizes (d) were calculated, and Cohen's (1988) guidelines were followed for interpretation. According to Cohen, a small effect is represented by $d = 0.2$, a medium effect by $d = 0.5$, and a large effect by $d = 0.8$. Table 3 confirms statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) differences and medium to large effect size differences between the segments based on all the variables except for *below-the-line* marketing ($p = 0.395$). In addition, chi-square tests with phi-values (ϕ) were performed to identify any significant differences between the segments concerning the categorical variables measured in the questionnaire. Cohen's (1988) criteria were applied to interpret the phi-values, where 0.1 indicates a small effect, 0.3 is a medium

Table 3. T-test results for segment differences.

Segment characteristics (continuous variables)	Segment 1 Engaged authenticity seekers (N = 101) Mean	Std. Dev.	Segment 2 Emerging authenticity seekers (N = 79) Mean	Std. Dev.	*t*-value	Sig. (*p*-value)	*d*-size
Marketing mediums							
Below-the-line (0.02)	3.22	0.92	3.11	0.77	0.83	0.395	0.12
Above-the-line (0.26)	3.96	0.67	3.43	0.79	4.87	0.001*	0.67***
Motive							
Cultural heritage interest (0.35)	4.42	0.53	3.99	0.47	5.78	0.001*	0.82****
Perceived authenticity							
Truthful messages (0.32)	4.63	0.44	4.20	0.62	5.48	0.001*	0.70***
Truthful site representation (0.42)	4.47	0.47	3.96	0.60	6.41	0.001*	0.85****
Object-based authenticity							
Diverse interpretation attributes (0.82)	4.57	0.44	3.82	0.58	9.75	0.001*	1.28****
Tangible attributes (1)	4.38	0.57	3.39	0.62	11.12	0.001*	1.59****
Existential authenticity							
Educational attributes (0.72)	4.40	0.55	3.64	0.58	8.95	0.001*	1.31****
Recreational attributes (0.44)	4.22	0.73	3.52	0.64	6.68	0.001*	0.95****
Supporting factors							
Quality service (0.59)	4.67	0.39	4.03	0.69	7.89	0.001*	0.93****
Modern facilities (0.57)	4.35	0.61	3.58	0.70	7.80	0.001*	1.09****
Experience outcome							
LCHS loyalty (0.53)	4.61	0.39	4.10	0.55	7.40	0.001*	0.94****
Socio-demographic and behavioural variables							
Av. Age (0.39)	39.88	10.48	30.41	9.87	6.17	0.001*	0.90****
Level of authenticity experienced (scale of 1-10) (0.12)	7.94	1.86	6.99	2.29	3.08	0.003*	0.42**

*Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.05$. Effect sizes: small effect; **$d = 0.2$; medium effect; ***$d = 0.5$; and large effect; ****$d = 0.8$

effect, and 0.5 is a large effect. The results are presented in Table 4. Place of origin, marital status, level of education and economic activity yielded statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$).

The importance rating of the variables was used to determine the critical factors in forming the two clusters, with a rating of between 0.8 and 1.0 indicating the highest predictive importance. Conversely, items with a score of 0.0-0.2 are considered less critical in forming the two clusters. The importance rating of each variable is shown in brackets in Tables 3 and 4. The object-based authenticity attributes (*tangible attributes* and *diverse interpretation attributes*) had the highest predictive importance in defining differences between the two clusters. The existential attributes (*educational attributes* and *recreational attributes*), the socio-demographic variables, economic activity and age, the supporting factors (*modern facilities* and *quality service*), *LCHS loyalty*, the perceived authenticity factors (*truthful site presentation* and *truthful messages*), and the motive (*cultural heritage interest*) also had relatively high predictive importance. The remaining variables are less important in cluster formation. A typology of LCHS visitors is suggested based on the results.

Comprehensive authenticity seekers

Segment 1, consisting of 101 respondents, represents the largest segment. In general, this segment rated the factors higher than Segment 2. The *tangible attributes* ($\bar{x} = 4.38$) and *diverse interpretation attributes* ($\bar{x} = 4.57$) were rated as critical object-based authenticity factors, alongside the existential authenticity factors [*educational attributes* ($\bar{x} = 4.40$) and *recreational attributes* ($\bar{x} = 4.22$)]. Compared to Segment 2, significantly more respondents in Segment 1 were employed in the public (59%) or private sector (27%), indicating a higher level of discretionary income. This segment was also older ($\bar{x} = 40$ years) than Segment 2. The supporting factors, namely *quality service* ($\bar{x} =$

Table 4. Cross-tabulation and Chi-square results on segment differences.

Segment characteristics (categorical variables)		Segment 1 Engaged authenticity seekers N = 101	Segment 2 Emerging authenticity seeker N = 79	X^2	df	Φ-value	*p*-value
Place of origin (0.10)	South African resident	88%	99%	7.455	1	0.204**	0.006*
	International (Outside South African borders)	12%	1%				
Province of residence (0.05)	Eastern Cape	33%	35%	13.144	8	0.270	0.107
	Free State	2%	1%				
	Gauteng	19%	28%				
	KwaZulu-Natal	7%	3%				
	Limpopo	2%	4%				
	Mpumalanga	1%	1%				
	North West	9%	15%				
	Northern Cape	16%	11%				
	Western Cape	12%	1%				
Gender (0.02)	Male	72%	75%	1.603	2	0.094	0.449
	Female	26%	25%				
	Non-binary	2%	0%				
Marital status (0.23)	Single (never married)	41%	77%	30.084	5	0.409***	0.001*
	Married	46%	14%				
	Domestic partnership	4%	1%				
	Widowed	5%	0%				
	Divorced	4%	6%				
	Separated	1%	1%				
Level of education (0.17)	No formal education	2%	18%	23.404	5	0.361***	0.001*
	High school diploma	6%	14%				
	National Certificate (Vocational)/ National Accredited Technical Education Diploma	14%	16%				
	Tertiary diploma	35%	14%				
	Bachelor's Degree	42%	37%				
	Postgraduate Degree	2%	1%				
Economic activity (0.62)	Student	8%	54%	70.613	5	0.626****	0.001*
	Unemployed	2%	14%				
	Employed in the private sector	27%	14%				
	Employed in the public sector	59%	16%				
	Retired	0%	1%				
	Prefer not to say	4%	0%				

* 5% level of significance; φ-value: **small effect = 0.1; ***medium effect = 0.3 and ****large effect = 0.5.

4.67) and *modern facilities* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.35), were essential for a satisfying visitor experience. Segment 1 had higher levels of *LCHS loyalty* intentions ($\bar{x}$ = 4.61) and demonstrated a clearer understanding of the concept of authenticity, as evidenced by their higher ratings of the perceived authenticity factors [*truthful site representation* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.47) and *truthful messages* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.63)]. Additionally, this segment was motivated more by *cultural heritage interest* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.42) and was more influenced by *above-the-line* marketing ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96) regarding awareness of LCHS in South Africa.

The overall level of authenticity experienced at the LCHS they visited was also higher ($\bar{x}$ = 7.94 out of 10) than in Segment 2. Regarding other socio-demographic variables with less predictor importance, most respondents in Segment 1 were South African (88%). However, compared to Segment 2, this segment also had international respondents (12%). There was an almost equal distribution between single (41%) and married (46%) respondents. Compared to Segment 2, this segment had a higher level of education, with 42% having a bachelor's degree and 35% having a tertiary diploma. Based on the distinct attributes and characteristics of Segment 1, they are labelled 'Comprehensive authenticity seekers'. This label underscores the segments' strong interest in cultural heritage, their importance of object-based and existential authenticity, and their high loyalty

intentions towards LCHS. It also reflects their desire for a comprehensive and truthful representation of the site, their higher educational level, and the influential role of above-the-line marketing in their awareness and choice of LCHS.

Emerging authenticity seekers

Segment 2, consisting of 79 respondents, represents the smaller segment and exhibits distinct characteristics compared to Segment 1. This segment had an overall lower rating of all the factors compared to Segment 1. This finding is particularly noteworthy since this segment comprises mostly South Africans (99%). One possible explanation for this observation is that their perception of authenticity and their experience at LCHS are not yet fully developed, or this segment may have a lesser appreciation for these sites. This observation is particularly intriguing since LCHS are primarily marketed to locals as a distinct cultural heritage experience. Segment 2 is significantly younger than Segment 1 ($\overline{x} = 30$ years) and had lower levels of education [Bachelor's degree (37%), no formal education (18%), and a national certificate (16%)]. This segment mainly comprised singles (77%) and students (54%), indicating lower discretionary income levels. Based on the segments' characteristics, they are labelled 'Emerging authenticity seekers'. This label reflects the group's nascent understanding or appreciation of authenticity at LCHS, given their overall lower ratings of authenticity factors than Segment 1. Their young age, lower educational levels, and single and student status suggest they are still in the early stages of their cultural heritage tourism appreciation; hence the term 'emerging.'

Discussion

This research offers significant insights into the demand dynamics of delivering authentic experiences to visitors at cultural heritage sites. While numerous studies have delved into market segmentation of cultural heritage tourists, this research stands out by examining various segmentation bases encompassing socio-demographic variables, visitation patterns, motivations, perceived authenticity indicators (both object-based and existential), and the quality of facilities and services, and the outcomes of authentic visitor experiences. The sampled respondents displayed diverse demographics. The Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFAs) highlighted key constructs attracting tourists to LCHS, and cluster analysis identified two primary visitor segments, further expanding upon the existing literature on market segmentation for cultural heritage sites.

Theoretical findings

In answering the first research question, drawing from socio-demographic data and EFA results, two primary market segments were discerned: 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' and 'emerging authenticity seekers'. A notable finding here is the distinction in socio-demographic attributes across these segments. As recognised by Cheung and Huang (2018b), cultural tourists are inherently heterogeneous. While 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' included international and domestic tourists, the 'emerging authenticity seekers' were solely domestic. Although other attributes such as gender, age, and marital status showed minimal variation between the segments, these differences align with the conclusions of McKercher (2002) and Nguyen and Cheung (2014) and suggest the necessity to craft bespoke cultural heritage tourism strategies to cater to the distinct needs of different visitor groups. It is pivotal for the marketing strategies to resonate with individuals across varying age groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

Further, both segments predominantly considered 'above the line' marketing mediums to be preferred, answering the second research question. Linking the finding to the existing literature, it is evident that the preferences of both 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' and 'emerging authenticity seekers' for above-the-line marketing methods such as travel blogs, guides, word of mouth,

websites, previous visits, and social media, align with the broader trends identified in the literature on heritage tourism marketing (Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Chhabra, 2010; Hasan & Jobaid, 2014; Henama et al., 2016; Neuhofer et al., 2012; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991). The effectiveness of these methods, especially in the digital space like social media and travel blogs, echoes the findings of Xiao and Mair (2006) and Gartner (1994) regarding the impact of advertising through various media and the importance of evoking consumer responses, as studied by Walters et al. (2007). This trend highlights a shift in heritage tourism marketing towards methods that foster engagement and create vivid consumption visions, which is crucial for appealing to specific visitor segments, as Chhabra (2009) suggests.

Both segments deemed *cultural heritage interest* the primary motivation to visit LCHS, answering the third research question. The 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' attributed a higher significance to this aspect. While comparing these findings with past research on motivation as a segmentation variable, our 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' mirror previously identified segments such as 'purposeful cultural heritage tourists' (Cheung & Huang, 2018a; Cruz et al., 2020; McKercher & du Cros, 2002). The results further corroborate the push–pull theory by Correia et al. (2013) and Lopes (2011), indicating different factors that draw visitors to cultural heritage sites. Such parallels indicate that heritage managers must acknowledge the inherent cultural heritage interests that drive tourist attraction.

On the other hand, the 'emerging authenticity seekers' present a more nuanced profile. Notably, this segment, which mainly includes younger domestic visitors, demonstrated an evolving understanding of authenticity at LCHS. Contrary to the findings of Nguyen and Cheung (2014), which suggested that domestic tourists experienced deeper heritage connections, our study showed that the 'emerging authenticity seekers' segment might not fully appreciate these sites. This underscores the importance of leveraging modern promotional channels, like TripAdvisor, blogs, or social media platforms, which profoundly influence this digitally native segment.

Regarding the fourth research question, examining the visitors' grasp of authenticity showed that 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' possessed a more nuanced understanding, which echoes the findings of García-Almeida (2019) and Genc and Gulertekin Genc (2023). Such results emphasise the importance of ensuring the authenticity of interpretative content at these sites. Furthermore, the current study's findings suggest the potential to enhance the visitor experience by integrating object-based and existential authenticity with superior facilities and services.

In answering the fifth research question, the study underscores the significance of supporting facilities and services in delivering authentic visitor experiences. While both segments viewed these as vital, the 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' emphasised these attributes more. Such perspectives align with the insights of previous research (Abuamoud et al., 2014; Hou, 2009; Kamal & Pramanik, 2015; Mgxekwa, 2016), indicating the need for effective site management strategies. Lastly, outcomes concerning authentic visitor experiences illustrated that both segments exhibited heightened loyalty levels when provided with authentic experiences and supporting facilities, which concur with the findings of Bryce et al. (2015), Kolar and Zabkar (2010), and Park et al. (2019). Thus, managers must realise that combining genuine attributes and well-maintained facilities can lead to a more loyal visitor base.

Practical recommendations

The practical recommendations for South African heritage tourism practitioners in the context of LCHS can be enhanced by integrating these sites' unique characteristics and historical significance into strategies tailored for different visitor segments.

Identifying 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' and 'emerging authenticity seekers' indicates the need for distinct marketing strategies. For 'comprehensive authenticity seekers,' including both international and domestic tourists, marketing should focus on the depth and authenticity of the cultural heritage experience. This entails emphasising historical, cultural, and educational

aspects and harnessing rich narratives of LCHS. Storytelling that vividly portrays South Africa's transition from racial segregation to democracy, thereby underlining the pivotal role of these sites in the nation's liberation history, would resonate with this segment.

Conversely, for 'emerging authenticity seekers,' primarily younger domestic tourists, marketing strategies should capitalise on digital platforms like social media, blogs, and TripAdvisor. This segment would benefit from engaging, contemporary interpretations of heritage narratives, possibly incorporating digital storytelling, augmented reality experiences, or interactive multimedia to make the liberation struggle's history relatable and captivating.

Acknowledging the importance of facilities and services for both segments, heritage site managers are advised to invest in enhancing these aspects, including infrastructure improvements, diverse amenities, and knowledgeable guides. 'Comprehensive authenticity seekers' require high-quality, authentic experiences regarding facilities and interpretive content, while 'emerging authenticity seekers' might prefer modern amenities and tech-friendly services. Investment in both physical infrastructure and the authenticity of interpretive content is crucial. Ensuring the accuracy and depth of historical content is vital for 'comprehensive authenticity seekers,' whereas for 'emerging authenticity seekers,' integrating modern technologies and interactive elements can significantly enhance their experience, aligning with the significance they place on object-based and existential authenticity.

The observed heightened loyalty among visitors who received authentic experiences and adequate facilities underscores the need to invest in both object-based and existential authenticity. This includes preserving the integrity of heritage sites, offering authentic local experiences, and ensuring accurate and engaging historical narratives. Developing storytelling sessions and educational programmes that delve into LCHS stories could attract 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' interested in the educational aspects of cultural heritage tourism. For 'emerging authenticity seekers,' these programmes should be interactive and engaging, possibly utilising gamification or virtual reality storytelling.

Considering varied preferences in marketing mediums, heritage practitioners should employ a combination of traditional and modern promotional channels. Traditional mediums, such as brochures and documentaries, may appeal more to 'comprehensive authenticity seekers,' while digital channels, including social media campaigns, virtual tours, and influencer collaborations, could effectively attract 'emerging authenticity seekers.' Encouraging local community involvement in LCHS, offering visitors authentic local experiences like guided tours by local residents, traditional cuisine, and craft markets, will resonate with visitors seeking genuine cultural experiences and connections with the local community.

By implementing these strategies, South African heritage tourism practitioners can more effectively meet their diverse visitors' needs, enriching the experience at LCHS and potentially increasing visitor numbers and loyalty. These strategies honour the unique features of LCHS and ensure that a wide range of tourists share and appreciate their rich, multifaceted stories.

Conclusion

This study emphasises the significance of comprehending the multifaceted segmentation bases of tourists within the realm of cultural heritage tourism. Factors such as visitation behaviour, motivation, perceived authenticity indicators, supporting facilities, services, and the outcomes of authentic visitor experiences were discerned. The results underscore the pivotal role of these elements in curating authentic visitor experiences, thereby enriching both theoretical and practical perspectives of cultural heritage tourism authenticity. Theoretically, this research suggests that the actions of tourists align with their intrinsic motivations, perceptions of authenticity, and the quality of facilities and services at cultural heritage sites. Practically, this research aids in understanding the outcomes of authentic visitor experiences at LCHS in South Africa when all the requisite attributes and supporting facilities are met. It accentuates the multifaceted visitor demographics at LCHS and

stresses the imperative of fostering authentic experiences to sustain visitor satisfaction and ensure enduring viability.

The LCHS managers and marketers are tasked with transforming visitors from the identified 'emerging authenticity seekers' into devoted cultural heritage enthusiasts akin to those in the 'comprehensive authenticity seekers' segment. Visitor loyalty emerges from authentic visitor experiences, shaped by the calibre of perceived authenticity indicators and the supplementary facilities and services. Perceived authenticity resonates with a profound cultural heritage affinity and value, which can shape the visitor experience. Elements such as object-related authenticity, existential authenticity, and supporting services play an integral role in shaping gratifying experiences, thus influencing the depth of perceived authentic experiences by visitors. Visitors' decisions to endorse and revisit sites hinge on the authenticity of the cultural heritage attributes and how well they cater to their expectations, thus positioning perceived authenticity as integral to visitor loyalty. The waning allure of LCHS for younger cohorts is disconcerting. Integrating both perceived authenticity metrics (objective and existential) and supportive facilities is paramount.

Limitations and directions for future research

Noteworthy limitations encompass data collection impediments during the COVID-19 lockdowns and the fragmented responses in digital questionnaires. Future scholarly pursuits should delve into empirical evidence relating to authenticity at liberation cultural heritage sites and undertake a more in-depth examination of the authenticity concept, given the existing discrepancies in academic consensus. Since the data were sourced from a specific locale (LCHS), extrapolating these findings to other cultural heritage locales demands circumspection. To the best of the researchers' understanding, this study pioneers assessing multifaceted segmentation bases, including socio-demographic attributes, visitation tendencies, motivations, and perceived authenticity indicators. Empirical insights on authenticity concerning general cultural heritage tourism, especially iconic sites, remain to be unearthed. Given the focus of this research on a liberation heritage milieu, its conclusions might not be universally applicable. Further research could explore other integral and site-specific traits of cultural heritage assets that influence authenticity perceptions of tourists, and the scope could be expanded to include visitors of other heritage sites within South Africa and abroad.

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Appendix A. EFA statements and factor loadings.

Identified factors and statements	Factor loadings
Aspects of marketing mediums	
Above-the-line	
Travel blogs	.831
Travel guides (books)	.807
Word of mouth	.751
Websites	.731
Previous visits	.713
Social media (Facebook, Twitter [now X], Instagram)	.615
Below-the-line	
Community projects	.841
Apps (Cell phone applications)	.764
Direct marketing material (brochure, postcard)	.759
School/college/university	.741
Magazines	.636
Motives for visiting South African Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites	
Cultural heritage interest	
To increase my knowledge about the Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites	0.866
To learn about South African culture and heritage	0.859
To enrich my personal knowledge	0.817
To discover new places and things	0.804
To include such a visit as part of a family or holiday trip	0.775
To find out more about the South African history of Apartheid	0.756
Since I happened to be in the area	0.392
Perceived authenticity	
Truthful messages	
The messages and interpretations delivered at the sites are truthful	.931
Telling the truthful history of the site, especially the history of Apartheid	.844
The sites' exhibitions tell and reflect the story as closely as possible to the reality of the event it represents	.823
The story of the site and liberation is true and unaltered	.794
Truthful site presentation	
The site is maintained and renovated using original material (e.g. original brickwork)	.906
Reconstructions should relate to the period within which the sites' attributes were constructed (original colour of buildings, paintings)	.860
The site's architecture and interior design should be genuine/original	.695
A cultural heritage site that is not tampered with (it is kept the way it always was)	.563
Aspects of object-based authenticity attributes	
Diverse interpretation attributes	
The site should provide accurate historical information	.956
Exhibits and interpretation (videos, text, demonstrations) should tell the authentic stories of the site	.858
Information, narration and storytelling about the site should be interesting and educational	.802
The sites' facilities must provide an educational experience	.797
Activities at the site need to showcase the true lives (cultures, customs, traditions) of the people from the society where the attraction is located	.769
Proper contextualisation of history should be provided (i.e. an explanation of how history affects us today)	.689
Both the exhibits and storylines should be based on the information and stories of Apartheid	.493
Tangible attributes	
The sites should blend in with the area where it is located.	.940
Products, souvenirs (beadwork, pottery, craft items) and food for sale should be unique to the site and reflect its history	.760
The buildings of the site should be unchanged and tell the story of the history of liberation	.533
The interior design/furnishings of the sites' buildings should be true to the original design/furnishings	.458
The site needs to protect the buildings' original architectural style	.323
Aspects of subjective authenticity attributes	
Educational attributes	
The feelings and points of view of those affected by Apartheid should be truthfully shown	.943
The sites must provide an experience that deepens my understanding of the site being visited and its message	.859
Knowledge, understanding and enlightenment about the site should be provided	.826
The sites' setting needs to provide me with an opportunity to learn (through observation or active participation)	.822
The site should encourage historical and heritage connections	.796

(*Continued*)

Continued.

Identified factors and statements	Factor loadings
The site needs to provide experiences that commemorate or recall bad or traumatic occurrences from the past	.713
The experience should be presented in a truthful way (e.g. traditional feasts and celebrations are organised as it was at the time they took place)	.711
During the visit, I should get the feeling and the sense of what the society is about (the society to which the site is connected)	.562
The sites' stories that are presented should be based on the significance of the site to entertain and educate	.500
The visit should provide me with an experience that is unique to any other experience	.459
Recreational attributes	
The visit to the site should offer an opportunity to escape everyday life	.879
I want to feel relaxed during my visit	.825
The experience should be enjoyable	.742
There should be special events (e.g. concerts, celebrations) connected to the site	.730
The visit should generate a sense of belonging through a learning experience	.520
The site experience should meet or exceed my expectations	.505
During the visit, I should feel connected to the related history and historical figures	.421
Facilities and services for satisfying visitor experience	
Quality service	
Friendly and diligent staff that are willing to assist visitors	.903
A clean heritage site (no litter, pollution, etc.)	.892
Staff that are tidy and professional	.878
Visible and frequent signage showing visitors where to go	.840
Facilities accessible to all (disabled-friendly, affordable prices etc.)	.836
Enough ablution facilities (toilets, washing basins, etc.)	.828
Knowledgeable staff (about all aspects of the heritage site)	.775
Standard induction on safety protocols	.661
Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems that are regularly cleaned, serviced and operating effectively	.644
Modern facilities	
Facilities for children (play areas, informative videos, etc.)	.860
Curio shop on-site (selling local arts and crafts, memorabilia, etc.)	.826
There should not be any long queues	.725
Access to medical services (sickbay)	.365
A location that is easily accessible (e.g. good road infrastructure)	.363
Aspects of the outcome of an authentic experience	
LCHS loyalty	
Recommend other Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites to my friends and relatives	.886
Visit other Liberation Cultural Heritage Sites in the future	.857
Comment positively on my experience	.830
Recommend the site last visited to friends and relatives	.802
Revisit the site	.742